

Frankenstein Reading Guide

Reading Assignment #1 (Chapters 1-5)

Letters 1-4

How is Walton similar to Victor?

Chapter One

Drawing from your knowledge of the play Othello, what warning would you give to Victor about his relationship with his sister?

Chapter Two

Identify a passage that illustrates a connection between Victor and Nature. Explain what this passage reveals about Victor's character.

Chapter Three

What are the mother's dying words to Victor?

What is the impact of these words on Victor and what does it reveal about his relationship with his mother and Elizabeth?

Chapter Four

1. How does Victor expect his creature to respond to him?

2. Describe Victor's work habits. What does it reveal about his character?

Chapter Five

1. List and analyze the denotative meaning of the words Victor uses to describe his creation in the first two pages of the chapter.

2. What do these words reveal about Victor's attitude towards his creation?

3. Describe the dream that Victor has about Elizabeth. Psychoanalyze the symbolic meaning of the details in this dream.

4. Explain the cognitive dissonance that Victor Frankenstein is experiencing as a result of his quest to create life (use the definition below to form your response).

Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously. The "ideas" or "cognitions" in question may include attitudes and beliefs, and also the awareness of one's behavior. The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, or by justifying or rationalizing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.[1] Cognitive dissonance theory is one of the most influential and extensively studied theories in social psychology.

Dissonance normally occurs when a person perceives a logical inconsistency among his or her cognitions. This happens when one idea implies the opposite of another. For example, a belief in animal rights could be interpreted as inconsistent with eating meat or wearing fur. Noticing the contradiction would lead to dissonance, which could be experienced as anxiety, guilt, shame, anger, embarrassment, stress, and other negative emotional states. When people's ideas are consistent with each other, they are in a state of harmony, or *consonance*. If cognitions are unrelated, they are categorized as *irrelevant* to each other and do not lead to dissonance.

A powerful cause of dissonance is when an idea conflicts with a fundamental element of the self-concept, such as "I am a good person" or "I made the right decision." The anxiety that comes with the possibility of having made a bad decision can lead to rationalization, the tendency to create additional reasons or justifications to support one's choices. A person who just spent too much money on a new car might decide that the new vehicle is much less likely to break down than his or her old car. This belief may or may not be true, but it would likely reduce dissonance and make the person feel better. Dissonance can also lead to confirmation bias and the denial of disconfirming evidence.

